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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage December 11 on the fourth round of talks between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait, which will be held in Taichung from December 22-24; on possible U.S. arms sales to Taiwan; and on the aftermath of the December 5 city mayors' and county magistrates' elections around the island. The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" ran a banner headline on page three, reading "The United States Planning to Sell Taiwan Black Hawk Helicopters; Will Likely Refuse to Sell the F16 Fighter Jets, and PAC-3 Missiles Are under Review." The pro-independence "Liberty Times" also ran a banner headline on page two, reading "United States Reportedly Will Sell Weapons to Taiwan; Submarine Deal Coming back to Life."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, two op-ed pieces in the "Apple Daily" discussed an article written by William A. Owens, a retired admiral of U.S. navy, who suggested that Washington abandon its military support for Taiwan and abolish the Taiwan Relations Act, in an attempt to pursue broader cooperation with China economically and strategically. Both articles said that China is using its lobbying efforts and influence to encourage the United States to "dig up Taiwan's roots" in the United States. End summary.

A) "China Is Digging up Taiwan's Roots in the United States"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 530,000] editorialized (12/11):

"In the wake of President Barack Obama's visit to Beijing, AIT Board [sic] Chairman Raymond Burghardt came to Taiwan to brief [the island on Obama's visit], pledging that the United States will continue to abide by the 'Taiwan Relations Act' (TRA) and assist Taiwan to strengthen its national capabilities. President Ma said after his meeting with Burghardt that [what Burghardt told him] was 'consistent' with what he had anticipated, and that now is the best time for U.S.-China-Taiwan relations in the past six decades. ... As for Ma's statement that Burghardt's briefing met his anticipation, there are two possible [explanations]: It is either that Burghardt reassured [Ma] about the U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security, which was within Ma's expectations, or Burghardt, speaking on behalf of Obama, expressed hope that both sides of the Taiwan Strait would unify with each other peacefully, or at least not confront each other -- a development also consistent with Ma's views about Taiwan's ultimate destiny.

"If such clues are still unable to wake up Ma's team to sense the danger Taiwan is facing, then a look at an article by William A. Owens, a retired admiral of the U.S. Navy, -- 'The United States Must Start Seeing China as a Friend' -- may [help it understand better]. ... Does this indicate that a pro-China force, with the encouragement of China, is attempting to abolish the TRA? The reason [behind it] is that the current situation and development of the United States should not be trapped by an old law made thirty years ago. Besides, U.S. cooperation with China is [one of] Washington's major interests, and it is not worthwhile to sacrifice

those interests just for the minor interests of Taiwan.

"The latest news was that the United States will likely agree to sell Black Hawk helicopters and PAC-3 missiles [to Taiwan] and has turned down the deal for F-16 C/D fighter jets. This indicated that Obama continues to adhere to the TRA and sell weapons to Taiwan, but in the meantime it also takes into consideration China's feelings. Though these may not be frontline weapons, the symbolic meaning [of the move] is sufficient to give Taiwan bargaining chips and confidence to talk with China. In addition, it also explains why Ma did not adopt a passive and resistant attitude toward arms sales just so that it can curry favor with China.

"The Ma administration is quite pleased with itself about its diplomatic truce [policy]. China, on the other hand, does not care about it at all, because it is quietly digging up Taiwan's roots in the United States via its lobbying groups. Washington does not need to abolish the TRA; all it has to do is to gradually reduce its arms sales to Taiwan, and there will be limited options left for Taiwan. [We] hope Ma's national security team will notice the dangerous tendency of the United States and strengthen the intensity of its lobbying efforts in the United States."

B) "China Wants to Eradicate the 'Taiwan Relations Act'"

Fu S. Mei, the Director of Taiwan Security Analysis Center, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 530,000] (12/11):

"On the same day when the 'Obama-Hu' joint statement was published, retired U.S. Navy Admiral William A. Owens wrote an article in the 'Financial Times' calling on the United States to abandon its military support for Taiwan and abolish the Taiwan Relations Act

(TRA), in an attempt to pursue broader and deepened economic and strategic cooperation with China. ... Though it is still difficult for the mainstream thinking in the U.S. government to accept Owens' ideas, the 'Sanya Initiative' [established by former Hong Kong governor C.H. Tung] has exposed the fact that a new and vigorous lobbying model China has adopted toward the United States on the Taiwan issue is quickly taking shape. Beijing is proactively building up the strength, scope, flexibility and vigor of its lobbying in the United States via all kinds of channels, and its method of 'using business to win over politics' has increasingly become its major means. The TRA, which serves as a cornerstone for stability across the Taiwan Strait, has become the first important target that Beijing is lobbying to repudiate.

"In the face of such a challenge, the [Taiwan] government should attach more importance to efforts highlighting the island's sovereignty and the government's determination to safeguard its sovereignty. Even though cross-Strait relations have seen some improvements, [Taiwan] must not give the outside world the impression that it is 'no longer fighting against China's attempt to unify or annex Taiwan.' ... In such a vein, Taipei should proactively propose to Washington bilateral cooperation on a new strategic level, which does not need to be limited to arms sales or [maintaining] the traditional military balance. Taiwan can further propose that it participate in efforts assisting the United States in areas outside of East Asia. Senior U.S. officials said the U.S. government and military were both very grateful for Taiwan's generous assistance in the U.S. war on terrorism in the wake of the September 11 tragedy. The fact that Washington immediately sent its frigates and helicopters to provide rescue assistance to Taiwan in the wake of Typhoon Morakot can be viewed as a result of Taiwan's long-term cultivation [of its relations with the United States]. As a result, the [Taiwan] government should attach great importance to sustainable cultivation [of its relations with the United States] and thereby accumulate strategic leverage for its future talks with China. ..."

STANTON